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MIE complies fully with the relevant sections of Maltese legislation, including the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act 2000, Employment and Industrial Relations Act 2002, The Equality for Men and Women Act 2003, Equal Treatment of Persons Order 2007, and amendments such as the Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics Act 2015, Marriage Act and Other Laws (Amendment) Act 2017, and other applicable laws in force.

1. PURPOSE

1.1 MIE is committed to fostering an inclusive environment that celebrates diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all its members. We will work with partners like the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality and other bodies to promote equity and community cohesion.

1.2 The purpose of this policy is to protect individuals with any protected characteristic (Appendix A) and to oppose discrimination and prejudice in all forms.

1.3 In line with our statutory and moral duties, MIE will remove barriers to equality, monitor performance against clear diversity targets, and address achievement gaps in learners through an annual Equality and Diversity Report.

1.4 All individuals will be empowered to reach their full potential within an environment of equality and respect. 1.4 All learners and staff will be supported to develop their full potential within an ethos reflecting the equal status of all members of the College.

2. SCOPE

2.1 This policy applies to all learners, staff, contractors, and any individuals associated with MIE . It sets expectations for behaviour and compliance with equality principles across all areas of operation.

2.2 MIE acknowledges its responsibility for the actions of its staff, learners, contractors, and subcontractors, ensuring that all adhere to equality laws and this policy.

2.3 Any actions violating this policy will result in disciplinary measures. Evidence of discrimination or harassment may be deemed gross misconduct, warranting disciplinary proceedings under the respective staff and student policies.

2.4 This policy goes beyond legal compliance, aiming to foster a culture of inclusivity, equity, and respect. It defines how MIE will fulfil its statutory duties while promoting best practices.

3 ACCESSIBILITY

3.1 All marketing materials and information regarding learning and employment opportunities will explicitly convey a commitment to equality and diversity. Materials will be made accessible in alternative formats (e.g., Braille, audio, or large print) upon request.

3.2 Distribution methods will be periodically reviewed to ensure accessibility for underrepresented or marginalized groups.

3.3 Admission and guidance procedures will prioritize fairness and transparency. Processes will be regularly audited to eliminate bias and ensure equitable access.

4 CURRICULUM

4.1 MIE will provide a comprehensive portfolio of inclusive study programmes that meet learners' diverse needs and offer equitable opportunities for success and progression.

4.2 Induction and tutorial programmes will ensure all learners are informed about the College's commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion. These sessions will provide examples of how learners can contribute to a positive and inclusive environment.

4.3 Learning practices will respect individual starting points, adapt to preferred learning styles, and offer varied assessment methods to promote equitable outcomes.

4.4 Learning resources will be reviewed to ensure they challenge stereotypes, celebrate diversity, and avoid bias.

4.5 Cultural awareness and inclusive practices will be embedded into all courses. Skills development in literacy, numeracy, and language will also align with inclusive principles.

4.6 Individualized support will be offered to learners requiring adjustments. Decisions will be based on robust assessments that comply with legal anticipatory duties.

5 EMPLOYMENT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

5.1 MIE is committed to fairness in all aspects of employment, including recruitment, retention, training, and promotion opportunities. Recruitment practices will prioritize transparency and inclusivity.

5.2 Annual analyses of employment data will be conducted, covering recruitment, promotion, and staff training, to identify and address disparities. These findings will inform ongoing improvement efforts.

5.3 Allegations of discrimination, harassment, or bias will be promptly investigated in accordance with relevant policies. Outcomes may include disciplinary action to uphold the principles of this policy.

5.4 Staff will be encouraged to disclose any disabilities, with MIE providing appropriate support and reasonable adjustments to ensure continued contribution and progression.

5.5 Proactive measures will be taken to accommodate employees who develop disabilities during their employment, ensuring equity in their roles and responsibilities.

6 MONITORING AND REVIEWING

6.1 The policy will be monitored through the Curriculum, Standards, and Student Experience Committee (CSSEC).

6.2 The effectiveness of the policy will be reviewed through:

- I. Regular analysis of learner participation, retention, achievement, success and progression by reported protected characteristics.
- II. Regular analysis of the staffing profile in relation to recruitment; levels of responsibility.
- III. Regular analysis of access to professional development opportunities and to promotion for all staff including those with protected characteristics.

7 RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- I. Equality Objectives: Goals aimed at improving equality outcomes across MIE.
- II. Admissions Policy: Ensuring fair access to MIE's programmes.
- III. Disciplinary Procedures: Frameworks for addressing breaches of this policy.
- IV. Complaints Policy: A transparent process for raising and addressing concerns.

8 RESPONSIBILITIES

8.1 All individuals within MIE, including staff, learners, customers and governors are responsible to ensure the observation of the principles of this policy. This relates to the treatment of others so that the environment in which we operate is free from prejudice and discrimination.

8.2 SMT will receive regular reports assessing progress and measuring impacts. They will also receive training in relation to the relevant legislation.

8.3 This policy will be overseen by the CSSEC and will be monitored by the SMT

8.4 SMT will take responsibility for ensuring that the principles outlined in this policy will be integrated throughout their strategic and operational decision-making process ensuring full compliance with equality legislation.

8.5 The Head of Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance is responsible for:

- I. policy development, implementation and monitoring to ensure compliance with legal obligations.
- II. ii ensuring the formal monitoring and review of this policy in line with relevant good practice.
- III. monitoring the equality action plan to ensure progress in meeting the equality objectives outlined in the plan.

8.5 Staff will receive mandatory training on equality and diversity during their induction and through ongoing development opportunities.

8.6 Contractors and external partners will be required to adhere to the principles of this policy.

8.7 Any breaches of this policy will be investigated and may result in disciplinary action.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

MIE is committed to ensuring that this policy:

Aligns with Maltese Equality Law, the EU Equal Treatment Directives, and global best practices.

Does not unintentionally disadvantage any protected groups.

Actively mitigates potential adverse impacts through regular assessments and stakeholder consultations.

Appendix A

Protected characteristics

Protected characteristics are defined as:

- Age: Protection against discrimination based on age or age groups.
- Disability: Covers physical, mental, and sensory impairments with long-term effects.
- Gender reassignment: Includes individuals undergoing, intending to undergo, or who have undergone gender reassignment.
- Marriage and civil partnership: Includes legally recognized unions, including same-sex marriages.
- Pregnancy and maternity: Protection against unfavourable treatment due to pregnancy, childbirth, or maternity leave.
- Race: Covers discrimination based on ethnicity, nationality, or national origins.
- Religion or belief: Includes both religious and philosophical beliefs as well as lack of belief.
- Sex: Protection against gender-based discrimination.
- Sexual orientation: Covers heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, and non-binary identities.

Definition of protected characteristic.

Age

A reference to age as a protected characteristic covers individuals belonging to a particular age group or range. An "age group" may include specific ages (e.g., 18, 50) or broader categories (e.g., young people, older adults). Discrimination based on age, including stereotypes about capabilities or preferences, is prohibited (**Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act 2000**; EU Directive 2000/78/EC).

Disability

Disability includes any physical, mental, or sensory impairments that have a substantial and long-term negative impact on an individual's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Conditions such as chronic illnesses, mental health disorders, or learning disabilities are included. Employers and institutions must make reasonable adjustments to accommodate individuals with disabilities (**Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act 2000**; UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006).

Gender Reassignment

This applies to individuals who are undergoing, have undergone, or intend to undergo a process of transitioning from one gender to another. Protection extends to all aspects of social and professional life, regardless of whether the individual is undergoing medical treatment or legally changing their gender identity (**Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics Act 2015**, Malta; EU Directive 2006/54/EC).

Marriage and Civil Partnership

This characteristic includes individuals who are legally married or in a civil partnership. Same-sex marriages and civil unions are equally recognized under Maltese law. Individuals are protected from discrimination based on their marital status or choice to marry or form a partnership (**Marriage Act and Other Laws (Amendment) Act 2017**, Malta; EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Article 9).

Pregnancy and Maternity

This protects individuals from discrimination due to pregnancy, childbirth, or related conditions. Maternity protection includes a period of leave following childbirth, during which an individual cannot be treated unfavourably. This also extends to protections for those supporting individuals during pregnancy or maternity leave (**Employment and Industrial Relations Act 2002**, Malta; EU Pregnant Workers Directive 92/85/EEC).

Race

Race encompasses an individual's colour, nationality, ethnicity, or national origins. Discrimination based on racial stereotypes, language, or cultural assumptions is strictly prohibited. Institutions must actively promote racial equality and address any form of systemic racism (**Equal Treatment of Persons Order 2007**, Malta; International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965).

Religion or Belief

This characteristic includes individuals with religious beliefs, philosophical beliefs (such as humanism), or a lack of belief (e.g., atheism). Protection ensures freedom from discrimination based on personal beliefs, including in dress codes, dietary requirements, or observance of religious practices (**Equality for Men and Women Act 2003**, Malta; EU Directive 2000/78/EC).

Sex

This refers to the biological distinction between male and female. Institutions must ensure equal treatment regardless of sex, particularly in opportunities, pay, and responsibilities. Protection also covers gender-based harassment or stereotyping (**Equality for Men and Women Act 2003**, Malta; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979).

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation includes attraction toward individuals of the same sex (gay or lesbian), opposite sex (heterosexual), or both sexes (bisexual). Maltese law also recognizes and protects non-binary and fluid orientations. Discrimination based on assumptions about sexual orientation or relationships is prohibited (**Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics Act 2015**, Malta; EU Directive 2000/78/EC).

Additional Considerations

While these are the legally defined protected characteristics, MIE actively supports a broader interpretation, promoting inclusivity for emerging areas such as:

- **Neurodiversity:** Embracing variations in cognitive function, including autism and ADHD (UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006).
- **Intersectionality:** Recognizing that individuals may experience overlapping forms of discrimination, such as being both a woman and a person of colour (Crenshaw, 1991).

References

- Crenshaw, K., 1991. Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), pp.1241–1299.
- European Union, 2000. Council Directive 2000/78/EC Establishing a General Framework for Equal Treatment in Employment and Occupation.
- Government of Malta, 2000. Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act.
- Government of Malta, 2002. Employment and Industrial Relations Act.
- Government of Malta, 2007. Equal Treatment of Persons Order.
- Government of Malta, 2015. Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics Act.
- United Nations, 1965. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).
- United Nations, 2006. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).